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ABSTRACT

In most cases, the pervasive establishment of all-day kindergartens was premature. A review of existing studies on the impact of all-day kindergarten indicated that the issue has been inadequately investigated, and that inconsistent findings have been reported. In particular, there is a dearth of empirical research that defines the effect of all-day kindergarten on middle-class children, especially those scoring in the lower third of readiness criteria. In general, very few of the results from experimental research have implications supportive of the majority of all-day kindergartens. Current all-day programs are built on the prototypic academically prepared, highly verbal child who comes to school free of emotional and social stress and has a high level of energy and endurance. Although young children need developmentally appropriate and nurturing care and parents are under the impression that the schools provide developmentally appropriate programs, the quality and appropriateness of the majority of all-day kindergarten curricula have yet to be substantiated. However, sufficient principles, guidelines, and policies exist for guiding the development of appropriate curricula for all-day kindergarten programs. A program that is carefully planned and properly executed holds potential benefits for most children and should be offered as an option. (RH)

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Are Social and Economic Changes in Family Patterns Dictating the Frequency and Curriculum of All-Day Kindergartens?

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The relative proliferation of everyday, all-day kindergartens has its principal roots in economic and social changes across the country. To a large extent, this alternative schedule is an outgrowth of changing family patterns, namely: 1) single parent families and households where both parents work and there is a desire for day care in an educational environment; 2) an increase in the number of children who have had preschool or day care experience; and 3) interest in academic preparation for later school success (Rothenberg,1984). The trend has also been propelled by educational motivations, based mainly on evidence that all-day kindergarten can make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged youngsters. In many cases all-day kindergartens are established without due consideration of the many foundational factors which will contribute to the success or failure of the program and, more importantly, its effect on individual children.

A search of the literature indicated very few quality controlled empirical studies concerned with the effectiveness of such programs,

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and far fewer which spoke to the effect of such programs on the moderate to high risk learner in a non-exceptional learning environment.

It is the purpose of this paper to: 1) establish a rationale for empirical studies which utilize representative cross-sections of kindergartners in non-exceptional learning environments; and 2) to highlight and discuss those principles of child development, learning, and teaching which must be addressed before goals and curriculum are developed and programs established.

Perspectives

Child Development Concerns

Kindergartens began as full-day programs; but the growth in the student population and the effects of the Great Depression caused many schools systems to adapt the half-day session so that one teacher in a single classroom could serve two groups of students (Almy, 1978). In the 1920's demonstration nursery schools, designed by developmental psychologists, were established with child-study centers. During the 1940's and 1950's nursery schools were established and oriented on the concepts of Dewey, Freud, and Montessori.

The emphasis was on the "whole child" and the curriculum was an extension of the kind of informal learning opportunities offered in

middle-class homes (Moore, 1977). Kindergarten was an extention of this type of nursery with an introduction to educational basics incorportated into the curriculum. Kindergarten also traditionally addressed the social, physical, and emotional needs of its 4 to 6 year old students. Webster (1984), a kindergarten teacher for 30 years, recalled that the crucial element of the kindergarten program, during the 1950's, was the child. Her role as teacher was to "observe, listen, help and most of all, guide" (p. 326).

Due to societal, economic, and political changes, the educational philosophies undergirding the kindergarten of the 1950's is not valid for the 1980's. Children entering kindergarten today are different from those who began school a few decades ago. The impact of pre-school, day care and nursery school programs on our traditional kindergarten curriculums has been recognized and addressed by educators with increasingly more academic programs. Additionally, in many families the benefits of a well-educated adult population and a generally higher standard of living have produced a more sophisticated and a more verbal youngster.

Today's all-day kindergartens are built on the prototypic academically prepared, highly verbal child, who comes to school free of emotional and social stress, and with a high level of energy and endurance. Many of the past goals, responsibilities, and functions of the kindergarten have been assumed by prekindergarten programs. In contrast to the educational philosophies of the 1950's, the all-day

kindergarten of the 1980's often emphasizes education almost to the exclusion of emotional, social, and physiologic development. Too often the decision to have all-day kindergarten is made by administrators who have not sought counsel from early childhood educators before or after making the decision.

The general realization that the promise of all-day kindergarten programs did not always match actual accomplishments signaled the need for greater accountability. A kindergarten teacher could no longer be an "observant guide, she had to show that she is really teaching something" (Webster, 1984, p. 327). This was achieved through the implementation of mastery learning techniques and the development of clearly stated teaching strategies aimed at accomplishing specific goals. The Back to Basics movement brought with it the introduction of reading and math workbooks to kindergarten and an expanded curriculum that incorporated science, social studies and formal writing instruction (Webster, 1984). Kindergarten teachers have felt pressure to concentrate on academic subjects and to stress cognitive skills when teaching 5-year-olds (Gulino, 1986). Fromberg (1987) stated that "There are political pressures on kindergarten teachers to use the additional time for creating a workbook-oriented program devoted mainly to teaching the three R's as separate subjects in a linear way" (p. 4).

Ames (1984) represents those child development specialists and child psychologists who have developed sound psycho-developmental theoretic treatises opposed to the concept of all-day kindergartens.

The differences between the children of the 1980's and those of decades ago can be negative as well as positive. Many of the children have ambitious parents who harbor overly high aspirations for their 5-year-olds. Not all children come from the well-educated family with a good standard of living. More children are showing signs of emotional problems and social stress and parental pressures.

Specific academic concerns focus on: 1) the use of chronologic age as the sole criteria to determine a child's school entrance and academic readiness; 2) the assumption that the greater the academic input, the greater the quality and quantity of learning; 3) the inability of many youngsters to attend for long periods of time; 4) the need of some students for a less academically structured, more physically active setting; 5) social and emotional maturation levels not yet equal to school demands; and 6) fine motor, visual-motor, and auditory discrimination developmental levels not equal to academic curricula demands. Much of the research concerned with these developmental variables report contradictory results. For example, Winter and Klein (1970) did not find the children in their experimental study showing signs of fatigue, frustration or fading interest. Humphrey (1980) found no difference in absenteeism of children attending full-day compared to half-day kindergartens. Yet Terens (1984) found that many children do not have the ability to physically and psychologically adapt to the added time in school. Children were tired, restless, hyperactive, or inattentive during the last hour of

class; and there was a significant increase in the number of kidergarteners reporting to the nurse's office with minor "ailments". Although early childhood specialists recognize the needs generated by the changing structure of family life, they maintain this is a need to be satisfied by social agencies, not school systems. Providing day-care facilties if far preferable to academically overburdening a 4 or 5 year old (Ames, 1984).

Some early childhood specialists do see potential benefits in the full-day program. Gilstrap (1970) and Gorton and Robinson (1968) attribute a more relaxing, less hurried day, and an atmosphere which may produce less anxiety and fewer negative interactions.

Young children need developmentally appropriate as well as nurturing care and parents are under the impression that the schools will provide <u>developmentally appropriate</u> programs; yet the quality and the appropriateness of the majority of curriculums have yet to be substantiated. An exception is the all-day kindergarten program developed in Lawrence, New York. The program was designed to "expand and enrich the curriculum and program horizontally while maintaining the original half-day program's developmental and child-centered philosophy (Terens, 1984, p. 1)." The program can best be evaluated not only by the quality forethought, planning, and longitudinal test results, but by the nature and quantity of the changes that were made after the initial year. Changes include: reduction of class size from 22-23 to 18-20; development of a Small Kindergarten for those children

who have developmental delays or special needs; implementation of a rest period; a transition period consisting of half-days during the first two weeks of school; and teacher visits to each child's home during the first two weeks of school. An option for a 1:00 dismissal was insituted to be used in the children's best interest; one half-day class would be established if there were enough students. (A study conducted by Humphrey !1980! supported the half-day option.) Shortening the length of the day, as well as beginning and ending the day earlier, was recommended by the staff since the "present schedule is not in the best interest of kindergarten children and not educationlly appropriate (p. 7)".

Applicability of Research Results

Very few of the results from experimental research to date have implications supportive of the majority of all-day kindergartens. Surface results indicate that children attending all-day kindergartens do score higher on academic measures than those in half-day, everyday programs. Stinard (1982) reviewed 10 studies comparing half-day and full-day kindergartens and found students taking part in full-day programs demonstrate strong academic advantage at the end of first grade. Graja (1984) studying "33 major nationwide studies" concluded that there is a "significant advantage for the student exposed to the extended class (p.112)."

However, because of the relative newness of the all-day kindergarten, most studies involving advantaged students were not empirical or longitudinal. Conclusions were often based upon subjective data from administrators, teachers, and parents (Maruccia, 1985; McClinton & Lopping, 1981).

A notable number of the extant research concentrated on federally funded, all-day programs that had been specifically designed to remediate or prevent academic difficulties for children identified as being academically at risk (e.g. Nieman & Gastright, 1981). A large scale example of this type of program was begun in 1983 when New York City extended kindergarten to a full day. This program serves as a model to both crtics and advocates of all-day kindergarten. Preliminary reports show that the most dramatic gains are made by pupils coming from non-English speaking families. The program is monitored by many different groups, most of whom expressed satisfaction with the program. The city's 5-year-olds are learning more English, hearing more stories, eating more nutritious meals, and taking more trips to firehouses and zoos.

However, teachers complained about shortages of materials and overcrowded classrooms (some classes had more than 25 students with one teacher and no aides). Critics charged that teachers had not been given adequate training in early childhood education. Intense debates about curriculum prevailed. Some administrators and teachers favored a highly structured academic program, in traditionally layed-out

classrooms, with homework frequently assigned. A co-principal conceded that children in this type of program did not have "much time for playing and working on social adjustments" (Fiske, 1986, p. 25), but in 1985 the percentage of students reading on grade level increased 37% since 1978. Professional personnel in other schools strongly favored a more developmental approach believing that the structured class philosophy could cause feelings of frustration and failure in kindergarten (Fiske, 1986).

Three years after the program was initiated it exemplified the best characteristics and greatest liabilities of an all-day kindergarten.

Although research concludes that disadvantaged children benefit from All-Day Kindergarten, Cleminshau and Guidubaldi (1979) noted that these programs for disadvantaged students were exemplary; they were model programs which were carefully monitored in their development and implementation, and are of much higher quality than could be expected if they were replicated on a broader scale. They argue that conclusions drawn from such programs hinder "generalizations to a typical public school situation" (p.93).

Many of the empirical studies concerned with all-day kindergarten concluded that the child would be at a significant advantage when compared to the child enrolled in a half-day program: "child" implying all children. However, there is a near dearth of empirical research which defines the effect of all-day kindergarten on middle

socio-economic kindergarteners, especially those who score in the lower third of readiness criteria.

Socio-Economic Motivations

There are many political and socio-economic factors which have spurred all-day kindergarten; and these factors are not without precedence. A confluence of special needs and interests have historically produced change in the American educational systems.

Good early childhood education is supposed to benefit young children, but too often the primary impetus for the development of new or extented educational programs has been driven by the needs of working parents, political policy, or the economic health of the community.

During the Depression, the federal government sponsored day-care for three- and four-year olds because it was a convenient way to employ out-of-work adults and to distribute food to children. During World War II, the government again sponsored day care for as many as 400,000 pre-school children because the children's mothers were essential to the industries producing products needed for the war. The success of the Russia's Sputnik caused the federal government to have a renewed interest in public education and it gave significant financial support to experimental programs and research. The political and social upheavals of the 1960's brought new concerns about education of young

children. National attention was drawn to the educational inadequacies of minority and poor children during that same period (Scarr, 1986).

Most recently, there has been a great deal of discussion during the late 1970's and the 1980's concerning the care of children when both parents work outside of the home. The active employment of a growing number of mothers outside the home has resulted in a proportionate increase in 5 and 6 year-olds involved in day-care programs, increased babysitting arrangements, or in children joining the ranks of "latch key" children either prior to or after attending a half-day kindergarten session.

Parental pressure has been applied to school boards to consider the move to full-day kindergarten in many communities (e.g. Maruccia, 1985). Working parents have a great need for safe, affordable, high quality, and convenient care for young children. In many areas, what could be more affordable, convenient, and safe than the local school.

Decreasing school age population has forced many communities to close one or more schools. This inherently lowers the property values of the homes in that area and the community in general. Proponents of extended early education programs argue that public school facilities are there and available; and the schools represent a major resource and fianancial investment for communities (Shanker, 1984). Falling property values can be maintained by utilizing the extra classrooms in underpopulated schools with viable alternatives. Some communites have chosen to relocate and centralize all active classes and

architecturally partition off the underutilized parts of the school. The areas are then available on contractual basis to school boards who then lease the area to the local government for a variety of uses (e.g. senior citizen centers). Considering that day care, nursery school, and extended kindergarten have distinct philosophical orientations and different curriculums or programs; another viable and valuable use for these areas could be day-care or after-(half-day kindergarten) care facilities.

In the long run there is only one alternative that will be entertained for various reasons. First, all-day kindergarten is the only alternative that the local school board can institute without becoming entangled with the concerns and interferences from governmental social agencies and community groups. Second, it costs relatively little to keep the rooms filled with all-day kindergartens. Last, school board members are often individually affiliated with a political party; consequently, the results of their decisions will not only effect the schools, but the financial well being of the community as well as the status of the political party.

There is every indication that the use of public schools, for either the expansion of existing programs or any other alternative, will continue to be determined more by community politics and economics and by adult employment rather than by assessments of how children's needs can best be met.

Conclusions

The issue concerning all-day kindergarten is no longer whether it should exist or not.

The fact remains that the concept of all-day kindergarten has become a reality in many communities across the country despite objections, limitations, and the lack of statistically sound data from research incooporating average or advantaged school districts. The growth of all-day kindergarten has been particularly strong because it has a complex of roots involving economic and social changes as well as perceived educational needs.

Unfortunately, the wholesale establishment of all-day kindergartens was, in most cases, premature. A review of existing studies on the impact of all-day kindergarten indicated that the problem has been inadequately investigated, and that inconsistent findings have been reported. However, there are some exemplary programs which can serve as models (e.g. Terens, 1984); and much can be learned from the errors reflected and the weaknesses existing in some other programs.

Consequently, despite the scarcity of sound, evaluative research that has precluded definite answers regarding social and academic outcomes, there are sufficient samples of quality principles, guidelines, and policies which can guide the curricula development of

all-day kindergarten programs.

Educational Implications

White and Burka (1987) state that "traditions are the 'habits' of the system and philosophies and policies are its 'intelligence'" (p. 84). Most all-day kindergartens, especially those in advantaged socio-economic areas, were born primarily from tradition rather than from sound educational philosophies that encompass and account for the multiple variables which constitute each unique class of children. All-day kindergartens, also known as the "extended-day kindergarten", must do more than extend the day in the tradition and practices of the half-day kindergarden.

For the past 20 years, the half-day curriculum has become invidiously more academic and less focused on child development. Does this then imply continuation of the academic concentration for an additional three hours? Will there be a deliberated philosophical change resulting in changes in practices and policies? A philosophy underlying a half-day program cannot validly remain the same for a whole day program. The role the all-day kindergarten plays in the social and emotional development of the child should not be secondary to its role in the development of critical cognitive skills needed for reading and writing.

The decision to offer such a program must be based on those

factors that would constitute each program, including student, teacher and administrative profiles, funding, parent and community interest and support, educational philosophy and program goals.

The crucial determinant in the effectiveness of a full-day versus half-day kindergarten is not the amount of additional time but rather how that time is used. The all-day kindergarten provides sufficient time for educators to account for children's widely diverse abilities. The program must provide diagnosis and remediation of existing and potential learning deficits and differences, as well as individualized instruction according to children's needs. The combined elements of full-day kindergarten and a purposeful instructional program "tailored" to meet the needs of all children can yield better developed children as well as greater student achievement at the end of the kindergarten experience.

Kindergartners as a group are, by far, the most dynamic of all ages enrolled in the elementary grades. Educators involved in all-day kindergartens will have ample opportunity to come to know each continually developing student well, by virtue of the extra time alone. This additional knowledge will cause teachers and administrators to have more opportunities to function as professional consultants to parents and the community. Changes, such as shortening the day for individual or groups of students, may cause parental resistance (Gornowich & Landry, 1974; Terens, 1984). It is the responsibility of educators to provide strong necessary leadership when modifications are

in the best interest of the teaching-learning process.

An all-day kindergarten that is carefully planned and properly executed holds potential benefits for most children and should be offered as an option.

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